

The
Seconde
Nonnes
Tale

I leue al this thyng, quod Valerian,
for sother thyng than this, I dar wel say,
Under the hevene no wight thynke may.
¶ Tho vanysshed this olde man, he nyste where,
And Pope Urban hym cristened right there.

VALERIAN gooth hoom and fynt Cecilie
Withinne his chambre with an angel
stonde;

This angel hadde of roses and of lilie
Corones two, the which he bar in honde;
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
He yaf that oon, and after gan he take
That oother to Valerian, hir make.

¶ With body clene, and with unwemmed thoght,
Kepeth ay wel thise coronas, quod he;
fro Paradys to yow have I hem broght,
Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,
Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me;
Ne nevere wight shal seen hem with his eye,
But he be chaast and hate vileynye.

And thou, Valerian, for thou so soone
Assentedest to good conseil also,
Sei what thee list, and thou shalt han thy boone.
¶ I have a brother, quod Valerian tho,
That in this world I love no man so.
I pray yow that my brother may han grace
To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place.

THE angel seyde, God liketh thy requeste,
And bothe, with the palm of martirdom,
Ye shullen come unto his blisful feste.
¶ And with that word Tiburce his brother coom.
And whan that he the savour undernoom
Which that the roses and the lilies caste,
Withinne his herte he gan to wondre faste,

And seyde: I wondre, this tyme of the yeer,
Whennes that soote savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer;
for though I hadde hem in myne handes two
The savour myghte in me no depper go.
The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde.

VALERIAN seyde, Two coronas han we,
Snow-white and rose-reed, that shynen
cleere,
Whiche that thine eyen han no myght to see;
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my preyere,
So shaltow seen hem, leue brother deere,
If it so be thou wolt, withouten slouthe,
Bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe.

TIBURCE answerde: Seistow this to me
In soothnesse, or in dreem I herkne this?
¶ In dremes, quod Valerian, han we be
Unto this tyme, brother myn, ywis;
But now at erst in trouthe our dwellyng is.
¶ How woostow this, quod Tiburce, in what
wyse?
¶ Quod Valerian: That shal I thee devyse.

The aungel of God hath me the trouthe ytaught
Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wolt remeye
The ydoles and be clene, and elles naught.
¶ And of the myracle of thise coronas tweye,
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to seye;
Solempnely this noble doctour deere
Commendeth it, and seith in this manere:

The palm of martirdom for to receyve
Seinte Cecile, fulfild of Goddes yifte,
The world and eek hire chambre gan she weyve;
Witnessse Tyburces and Valerians shrifte,
To which God of his bountee wolde shifte
Corones two of floures wel smellynge,
And made his angel hem the coronas brynge:

The mayde hath broght thise men to blisse above;
The world hath wist what it is worth, certeyn,
Devocioun of chastitee to love.
¶ Tho shewed hym Cecile, al open and pleyn,
That alle ydoles nys but a thyng in veyn;
for they been dombe, and therto they been deye,
And charged hym his ydoles for to leve.

WHOSO that troweth nat this, a beest he is,
Quod tho Tiburce, if that I shal nat lye.
And she gan kisse his brest, that herde
this,

And was ful glad he koude trouthe espye.
¶ This day I take thee for myn allye,
Seide this blissful faire mayde, deere;
And after that she seyde as ye may heere:

Lo, right so as the love of Crist, quod she,
Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wise
Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,
Syn that thou wolt thine ydoles despise.
Go with thy brother now, and thee baptise,
And make thee clene; so that thou mowe biholde
The anges face of which thy brother tolde.

TIBURCE answerde and seyde, Brother deere,
First tel me whider I shal, and to what man?
¶ To whom? quod he, com forth with right
good cheere;
I wol thee lede unto the Pope Urban.
¶ Til Urban? brother myn Valerian,
Quod tho Tiburce; woltow me thider lede?
Me thynketh that it were a wonder dede.

Ne menestow nat Urban, quod he tho,
That is so ofte dampned to be deed,
And woneth in halkes alwey to and fro,
And dar nat ones putte forth his heed?
Men sholde hym brennen in a fyr so reed
If he were founde, or that men myghte hym spyre;
And we also, to bere hym compaignye;

And whil we seken thilke divinitee
That is yhid in hevene pryvely,
Algate ybrend in this world shul we be!
¶ To whom Cecile answerde boldely,
Men myghten dreden wel and skilfully

This lyf to lese, myne owene deere brother,
If this were lyvyng oonly and noon oother.

But ther is bettre lif in oother place,
That nevere shal be lost, ne drede thee noght,
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace;
That fadres son hath alle thyng ywroght,
And al that wroght is with a skilful thoght,
The Goost, that fro the fader gan procede,
Hath sowled hem, withouten any drede.

By word and by myracle Goddes sone,
Whan he was in this world, declared heere
That ther was oother lyf ther men may wone.
¶ To whom answerde Tiburce, O suster deere,
Ne seydestow right now in this manere,
Ther nys but oo God, lord in soothfastnesse;
And now of three how maystow bere witnessse?

¶ That shal I telle, quod she, er I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences three,
Memorie, engyn, and intellect also,
So in oo beyng of divinitee
Thre persones may ther right wel bee.
¶ Tho gan she hym ful bisily to preche
Of Cristes come, and of his peynes teche,

And many pointes of his passioun;
How Goddes sone in this world was withholde,
To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun,
That was ybounde in synne and cares colde:
Al this thyng she unto Tiburce tolde.
And after this Tiburce, in good entente,
With Valerian to Pope Urban he wente,

That thanked God; and with glad herte and light
He cristned hym, and made hym in that place
Parit in his lernyng, Goddes knyght.
And after this Tiburce gat swich grace,
That every day he saugh, in tyme and space,
The aungel of God; and every maner boone
That he God axed, it was sped ful soone.

Iwere ful hard by ordre for to seyn
How manye wondres Ihesus for hem
wroghte;
But atte laste, to tellen short and pleyn,
The sergeants of the toun of Rome hem soghte,
And hem biforn Almache the Prefect broghte,
Which hem opposed, and knew al hire entente,
And to the ymage of Juppiter hem sente,

And seyde: Whoso wol nat sacrifice,
Swap of his heed; this my sentence heer!
¶ Anon thise martirs that I yow devyse,
Oon Maximus, that was an officer
Of the Prefectes, and his corniculer,
hem hente; and whan he forth the seintes ladde,
Hymself he weep, for pitee that he hadde.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes loore,
He gat hym of the tormentours leve,
And ladde hem to his hous withoute moore,
And with hir prechyng, er that it were eve,

They gonnen
And fro Max
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With preeste
And afterwar
Cecile hem se
Now, Cristes
Cast alle awe
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